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DENIAL BY HELMS ON SPYING IS TOLD

Ex-Director of C.I.A. Said
to Testify He Didn't Know
of U.S. Surveillance

By DAVID E. ROSENBAUM

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 22—Richard Helms, the former Director of Central Intelligence, was reported today to have told a Senate committee that any C.I.A. infiltration of American dissident groups had been done without his knowledge.

That information was passed on to reporters by Senator Gale W. McGee, Democrat of Wyoming, after Mr. Helms testified at a closed hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Mr. McGee added that Mr. Helms had said nothing "that has impugned his integrity as a witness."

Senator John J. Sparkman, Democrat of Alabama, the committee chairman, said that Mr. Helms had given "very full, frank answers" to questions.

Other Senators, however, said that Mr. Helms had skillfully deflected questions about the extent of his knowledge of the intelligence agency's activities.

One Senator, who refused to be quoted by name, said that Mr. Helms's testimony was "all feathers and horseflies."

Wants More Testimony

Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, said that he wanted to hear other witnesses before deciding whether Mr. Helms had been completely candid in his testimony today and previously.

Two years ago, Mr. Helms, who is now Ambassador to Iran, told the Foreign Relations Committee under oath that he did not recall any C.I.A. participation in surveillance of domestic antiwar organizations, and that such surveillance was not a proper function of the intelligence agency.

Last week, William E. Colby, the current Director of Central Intelligence, testified that the agency, during Mr. Helms's time as director, had engaged in a secret domestic program that involved the infiltration of "about a dozen" undercover agents into American dissident circles.

Mr. Helms told another Senate panel last week that the C.I.A. had become involved in domestic intelligence gathering on Presidential authority because of an "upsurge of extreme radicalism" beginning in the late nineteen-fifties.

Senator McGee said that Mr. Helms insisted today that he had never authorized such a program. Mr. McGee would not say whether Mr. Helms had indicated who might have authorized it.

Senator Sparkman acknowledged that, at the hearing today, his committee was "not particularly concerned with the domestic operations of the C.I.A." Since the panel's jurisdiction is primarily in the area of foreign affairs.

Meantime, the Senate Republican leader, Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, named five Republican Senators to serve on the bipartisan select committee to investigate the operations of the C.I.A. and other intelligence agencies.

The committee is expected to be created officially by the Senate next week.

Senator John G. Tower of Texas is to be the ranking Republican and vice chairman of the panel. The other Republicans named are Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee, Charles McC. Mathias Jr. of Maryland, Richard S. Schweiker of Pennsylvania and Barry Goldwater of Arizona.

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